



The Reader's Guide

Volume 19, Issue 2

Literacy Volunteers of Lee County
An Accredited Affiliate of ProLiteracy America

Spring 2006

'Learners' as 'Leaders'

By Isa Wojtkowski

Three of us have just returned from Orlando, where we represented Literacy Volunteers of Lee County and participated in The National Core Leadership Training Workshop. Joining me (I serve as student member of the Board of Directors) were Kristen Przelomiec, Volunteer Coordinator, and Carmen Volpetti, one of LVLC's basic level students.

The trainers included the executive director of Value, the only national organization run by current and former students of adult basic education programs. The *Value* mission is to strengthen adult literacy efforts in the United States through learner involvement and leadership.

This excellent training was designed to help us become "Learner Leaders," because learners are some of the most important leaders in adult education and



(l-r) Isa Wojtkowski, Carmen Volpetti, and Kristen Przelomiec train as "Learner Leaders."

literacy. Adults who have learned to read know about the lives of other adults who need to learn to read. Adults who have learned to speak English as a second language know how others learning English feel. These adults know how to connect with learners.

Our special thanks go to the Florida Department of Education, Office of Community Colleges, for sponsoring this training.

I am truly grateful when I think back just two years ago to how helpless I felt with my English skills. How much more confidence I have from the opportunities and additional training made available to me as an Ambassador to the Literacy Volunteers efforts!

Hearing our personal stories changes the way people look at adult literacy students. They stop seeing us as "illiterates" and "failures" when they understand our frustrations, and they join in celebrating our achievements. They begin to see us as people working to improve our lives and the lives of our families.

The opportunities are available and you can make a difference. I challenge every student to set your goals not just on improving your personal levels of literacy, but paying back by helping others achieve and advance in literacy.

Celebrate at Annual Potluck

Adult students and tutors in Lee County will celebrate the ways that literacy has changed their lives at the annual Student Potluck, Friday, April 28, in Fort Myers.

"This is our opportunity to spotlight the achievements of our students, who have met their goals in the past year with the help of their tutors," said Tess Murphy, Executive Director, LVLC. These goals include learning to write a check, getting a driver's license, and achieving a job promotion.

"We will also thank the wonderful supporters and volunteers who enable this program to do its valuable work," she added. Call 278-4400 to participate!

LVLC Welcomes New Board Members

Literacy Volunteers of Lee County is thrilled to welcome three new members to the Board of Directors:

Julie Lewis, Attorney, Henderson/Franklin Attorneys at Law, with a concentration in the area of Tort, Insurance and Land-Use Litigation. Ms. Lewis earned her undergraduate degree from Saint Anselm College and her law degree from Boston College. She is admitted to the Florida and New Hampshire Bars.

Dr. Elsa P. Rogers, Chair, Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies, International College. At International College since January 1999, Dr. Rogers has taught at Florida Gulf Coast University, the University of

Louisiana at Lafayette, and the University of Memphis. She received her B.A. from the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, Master of Arts degree from the University of Memphis, and Ph.D. at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

Dr. Rebecca Totaro, Associate Professor of English, Florida Gulf Coast University. She received her B.A. from Whittier College, her M.A. from Yale, and her Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, where she has also taught. She is the author of "Suffering in Paradise: The Bubonic Plague in English Literature from More to Milton," published by Duquesne University Press, 2005.

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From the Executive Director

Raising Awareness About Literacy

I recently met with my counterparts at other non-profit adult literacy programs in Lee and Collier Counties. We are working on a Public Service Announcement to be shown on local television stations that will have two goals:

1. Let the public know that adult literacy programs are a very real need in our community.

For many, when they hear "literacy" they think of children. Children's literacy is, of course, of the highest importance. But the best thing a child can have is a literate parent, and about 20 percent of the adults in Southwest Florida are not literate.

ProLiteracy America, the national adult literacy organization, has found that children of low-literate parents tend to get poor care and poor nutrition at home and to do poorly in school. When adults enter literacy programs and improve their literacy skills, their children tend to have fewer nutritional and health problems, drop out of school less, and have fewer teen pregnancies, less joblessness and less social alienation.

2. Encourage people to volunteer in our program as tutors of the adults in our community who need help becoming literate in English.

Volunteering to be a tutor is a commitment of time and effort. However, the rewards are amazing and often immediate. Tutors work with adults who *want* to learn to read and write...who *want* to learn English. These students are determined and so appreciative of their tutor's effort.

LVLC is always looking for motivated volunteers who want to really make a difference in someone's life. If you would like to find out more about being a tutor, call 278-4400 and ask for Kristin (or e-mail kristinlvlc@earthlink.net).

The meeting with my cohorts from other adult literacy programs in Southwest Florida led to many good ideas for the Public Service Announcement. We also agreed on a tag line for all our programs, "*Literacy is everyone's business.*" You'll be seeing more of this as we all work to raise awareness about adult literacy programs.

— Tess Murphy

May 16 Workshop on Learning Disabilities

Research shows that 50 to 80 percent of adults in basic literacy programs (who are native English speakers but cannot read or write) may have diagnosed or suspected learning disabilities.

To help volunteer tutors better work with these students, Literacy Volunteers of Lee County is sponsoring a one-day workshop, "Taking the Mystique out of Learning Disabilities," on Tuesday, May 16. Rochelle Kenyon, Ed.D., a nationally

known expert in the field of learning disabilities, will present the free workshop at the South County Regional Library in Estero. Other sponsors include the State Literacy Resource Center, the Lee County Library System, and Region IV Adult Literacy Center.

All LVLC tutors are invited to attend. Contact Kelley Jain, Florida Literacy Coalition, at jaink@floridaliteracy.org or call (407) 246-7110 x203 by May 12.

How to Tutor Non-English Speakers

Tutor volunteers can participate in a workshop that will train them to teach speakers of other languages to read, write, and understand English. Three are scheduled, each from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with an hour for lunch, at:

April 22, Cape Coral Library

May 13, Edison College, Fort Myers Campus

June 3, South County Regional Library

Tutors who complete the workshop will be matched with a student or small group. Training is free, with a \$30 charge for materials. Contact Kristin at 278-4400 or kristinlvlc@earthlink.net.

'She Keeps Me Going When I Want to Give Up'

"I am sixty-one years old and have been with LVLC for the past nine years. I had a difficult time reading. Sounding out vowels and the blending of vowels were especially hard for me.

"I started by going to Cypress Mild School to see if I could take the GED test. They told me I needed help in reading. They sent me to LVLC, and there I met Mrs. Dorothy Johnson. We worked on sounds, reading and spelling for two hours a week. When Mrs. Johnson felt that my reading was better. We started on the GED review.

"It has been a long struggle because I quite high school the second year and went to work. There is no reason why I could not learn to read. Mrs. Johnson has given me self esteem. She keeps me going when I want to give up.

"Now we are studying subjects about history, science, and math, all of which I missed in high school. Besides this work on the GED, I have read different story books from LVLC offices, such as Shakespeare, *Moby Dick*, *Gulliver's Travels* and other small classics. I work full time, but when I have time to spare, I would read a book.

"Not only did I learn to read better, but I gained an interest in reading.

"Thanks to LVLC and my most wonderful tutor, Mrs. Dorothy M. Johnson, for all her time and for teaching me patience."

-- *Mary Lou Lisula*

(LVLC thanks Mary Lou Lisula for her essay and congratulates her on the tremendous progress she has made in learning to read and write. We share her appreciation for Dorothy M. Johnson, who just turned 95 years old and will never stop being a good teacher.)

35 New Tutors Trained

LVLC welcomes 35 newly trained volunteer tutors to its adult literacy program and appreciates the time and talent they are providing!

Gail Bachman	Leonard Libster
Susan Ballheimer-Cork	Stephanie Lilly
Suzanne Barbee	James (Jim) Logio
Carol Berry	Carol Mayer
Christine Boesen	Skip Mitchell
Dawn Boesen	Helen Novella
Nancy Braasch	Marjorie Pacheco
Linda Clemons	Linda Polhemus
Mimi Crotty	Karl Rodman
Edna Dachs	Peggy Salvesen
Anne Deignan	Judi Samson
Elizabeth Foster	Karen Sartoris
John Friedlund	Pauline Strahmand
Richard Garcia	Ellen Strobel
Harry Green	Valerie Sutherland
Kathleen Heise	Mary Treece
Jerry Hrinik	Jane Vos Hogg
Liv I	Joan Walton
Emily Kletzien	Wendy West
	Esther Wiener

LVLC Brings Literacy Classes to Workplace

LVLC has signed agreements with two more local businesses to carry out workplace literacy programs at their locations. These classes are held twice weekly for adults who speak other languages and wish to become literate in English.

Congratulations to these employers who recognize that literacy is everyone's business and are willing to invest in their employees:

- **Worthington of Renaissance, LLC**, where twice weekly classes are held for golf course landscape workers.
- **Pall Corporation**, where twice weekly classes are held for assemblers and machine operators.

Workplace classes are finishing up at **Sanibel Inn** and **'Tween Waters Inn** on Sanibel and Captiva.

Employers who are interested in learning more about LVLC's workplace literacy program should contact Simonne, 278-4400, simonnelvlc@earthlink.net.

April Book Fair a Big Hit!

LVLC is grateful to Barnes & Noble Booksellers for hosting a Book Fair, April 7-9, at its South Fort Myers store.

Local authors took center stage on Saturday, April 8, "Read for Literacy" Day. At press time, those scheduled to read from their works included: Dr. Rebecca Totaro, "Suffering in Paradise"; Tom Smoot, "The Edisons of Fort Myers"; Elizabeth Becka, "Trace Evidence"; Sara Williams, "The Don Juan Con" and "The Serenoa Scandal"; and Doug MacGregor, "The Best of Sunnyside Up."

LVLC recruited new volunteer tutors and raised funds to support the adult literacy program. Thank you to tutors and students who helped make this a success!

Join LVLC in Thanking Recent Donors

Literacy Patron (\$1,000+)

Barnes & Noble Booksellers
The Frank and Betty Bireley
Foundation
The Alan and Jacquelin Cadkin
Foundation
Wal-Mart, North Fort Myers

Educator's Society (\$500 - \$999)

Stephen Goldman

Student Sponsor (\$250 - \$499)

Frank Badagnani
BB & B Management
Sigma Phi Gamma
G. Napier Wilson

Reader's Circle (\$100-\$249)

Carlos Aragon
Grace Cochrane
Odie Harris
Irvine and Alwyn Johnson
Fran Rotino
Bat Yam, Temple of the Islands

Book Club (up to \$99)

Carolyn Awad
Fay Carney
Jody Cornell
Gary Kolko
J. Scott Legg
Gail Lenchner
Lee Marks
Beverly Nelson

(1/4/06 - 4/3/06)

Join Literacy Volunteers of Lee County!

Did you know that with a \$200 donation, LVLC can make a match of tutor and student? We believe that the ability to read changes a person's life and has an impact on his or her family, the workplace and the entire community. Can we count on your help?

Yes! Count Me in to Help!

- I'd like to become a tutor. Please send me your literature.
- I'll arrange to help with office work.
- I'll arrange to have you speak to our organization.
- Here's my tax-deductible contribution of \$_____.
- Other help I can give_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____ Best time to contact me _____

Be Part of Our Success

Book Club.....Up to \$99
Reader's Circle.....\$100-\$249
Student Sponsor.....\$250-\$499
Educator Society.....\$500-\$999
Literacy Patron.....\$1,000+
All donations are tax-deductible

"When adults enter literacy programs and improve their literacy skills, their children tend to have fewer nutrition and health problems, drop out of school less, and have fewer teen pregnancies..."
Proliteracy America,
March 2003

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